

A Journey Shared: The United States & China

Exclusion by Law

Standard:

- I. Culture
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change
- IV. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives:

The student will:

- ✓ Examine the historical background of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- ✓ Explore the dynamics of cultural discrimination
- ✓ Assess the role of the U.S. Government in immigration actions/legislation

Time:

1–2 class periods

Materials:

Access to web sites
Copies of “The Magic Washer” and Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)

Procedures:

1. Provide students with copies of *The Magic Washer*. (Source: Library of Congress)

Teacher Background Information

(Don’t immediately reveal this information to students.)

This is a soap advertisement from the late 1800s.

Printed text at bottom of poster:

“The Chinese Must Go,” referring to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the anti-Chinese sentiment of this period. Magic Washer was a soap manufactured by Geo. Dee, Dixon, Illinois.

Printed text at top of the poster:

“TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This is a Liquid Washing Compound and is FULLY GUARANTEED BETTER THAN ANYTHING EVER OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC: Its constant use will not injure the clothes nor turn them yellow. For sale by One Gallon, Half-gallon and Quart. TRY A SAMPLE AND BE SURPRISED.”

Handwriting at bottom:

“We have no use for them since we got this WONDERFUL WASHER: What a blessing to tired mothers. It costs so little and don’t [sic] injure the clothes.”

The Proclamation reads:

“To All whom it may concern. Hereafter no family will be without Magic Washer. Under penalty of being dirty.”

Ask the students these questions:

- a. What is the purpose of this picture?
 - b. Who are the key people?
 - c. What actions are taking place?
 - d. Is the tone of action positive or negative?
Identify objects in the picture. Why are they included? Are these objects symbolic?
 - e. What feelings regarding Chinese are displayed?
 - f. Why is there obvious prejudice against Chinese in the U.S.?
 - g. Identify stereotypes depicted in the poster.
 - h. Create a title that captures the meaning of this picture.
 - i. Write a short summary of the information presented in this poster.
2. Have students share their interpretations of this advertisement. Reveal the information from #1 to students. Discuss which aspects of the "soap ad" were identified by the students.

Extension of discussion:

What is the irony of Chinese being thrown out from this Magic Washer advertisement? (Note for students that some Chinese found ownership of laundries as a path to the "American dream.")

Consult the following source for description of Chinese laundries in San Diego:

http://www.sdchm.org/exhibit_template.php?exhibit=History%20of%20Chinese%20Hand%20Laundries%20in%20San%20Diego

3. Additional readings in #5 provide information about Chinese immigration and the role of Chinese in the United States. Students should not think that laundries were the only outlet for Chinese engagement.

Read this paragraph to students:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and until the expiration of ten years next after the passage of this act, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or having so come after the expiration of said ninety days to remain within the United States.

Ask students to ascertain what the U.S. Government planned for Chinese and why this legislation was passed. If students do not identify the source of this paragraph, explain that it is part of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).

4. Provide students with handout, Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), and read. Have students develop a list of facts about Chinese in the U.S. as indicated by this document.

Possible answers:

- a. Chinese are no longer welcome in the U.S.
- b. Law will take effect in 90 days.
- c. Chinese already in U.S. as of the 17th day of November, 1880, are exempt from the Exclusion Act.
- d. Punishment of any master of any vessel who brings Chinese into the U.S.
- e. Exceptions for those on vessels arriving under conditions of distress or in stress of weather—but Chinese on board must leave with vessel.
- f. Act applies to laborers.
- g. Government personnel will keep registry books with identification of Chinese in U.S. and issue certificates for individuals who leave and re-enter the United States.
- h. Chinese government may identify individuals (other than laborers) who may enter the United States
- i. Fine and imprisonment for anyone who commits forgery or creates fraudulent certificates.
- j. Master of any vessel must have list of all Chinese aboard if it enters U.S. port.
- k. Anyone who knowingly aids or abets unlawful entry of Chinese will be fined and imprisoned.
- l. Act does not apply to diplomats and other officers of the Chinese Government.
- m. No citizenship for Chinese in the U.S.
- n. A Chinese “laborer” refers to both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese miners.
- o. This is a very comprehensive act directly applied to one specific ethnicity.

Discuss the facts collected by students. What general conclusions can be made about the treatment of Chinese in the U.S.?

5. Use the Chinese Exclusion Act as a jump-off to a study of immigration, history of Chinese in United States, and/or an analysis of prejudice in U.S. society.

Sources available:

- a. A History of Chinese Americans in California
http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views3d.htm
- b. Excellent collection of articles with primary documents.
<http://www.harpweek.com/>
(Click on The Chinese-American Experience: 1857-1892)
- c. The Strange Case of the Chinese Laundry
Interesting short background about case Yick Wo v. Hopkins
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web08/segment6.html>

Extension Activities:

- 1.** Divide students into groups to debate the constitutionality of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) as a case presented before the Supreme Court.

Create the following groups:

- a.** Lawyers who represent Chinese laborers challenging the constitutionality of the Chinese Exclusion Act
- b.** Lawyers representing the U.S. government
- c.** Members of the Supreme Court who support the constitutionality of the Act
- d.** Members of the Supreme Court who oppose the Act

Have lawyers present their arguments before the justices.

Justices should present their opinions orally. Have students portraying the justices determine at some point what their final vote will be. Oral opinions will reflect this outcome.

- 2.** Have students explore the history of immigration in the United States. Identify prejudices reflected by treatment, legislation, cultural landscapes, and interaction of groups with each wave of immigration. ■